

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE OPEN SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Held on Wednesday, 19 February 1997, immediately following the Closed Session,
in Room S-GM 407-1, SGW Campus

Attendance

Present: Mr. Reginald K. Groome, *Chairman*, Dr. Tannis Arbuckle-Maag, Dr. Michael Brian, Dr. Terrill Fancott, Dr. Henry Habib, Mr. Peter Howlett, Ms. Sanyu Kiruluta, Dr. Lawrence Kryzanowski, Dr. Frederick Lowy, *Rector and Vice-Chancellor*, Ms. Hazel Mah, Sister E. McIlwaine Ph.D., *Vice-Chairwoman*, Mr. Donald W. McNaughton, Mr. Jacques Ménard, *Vice-Chairman*, Mr. Jeff Nearing, Mr. Brian Neysmith, Mr. Benoit Pelland, Mr. Richard Renaud, Mrs. Miriam Roland, Dr. Elizabeth Saccá, Mr. Robert Simioni, Ms. Lillian Vineberg, Mr. Jonathan Wener, Ms. Susan Woods

Officers of the University: Prof. Marcel Danis, Mr. Charles Emond, Mr. Larry English, Me Bérengère Gaudet, Dr. Jack Lightstone

Absent: Mr. Brian Aune, Mr. Alain Benedetti, Mr. Ronald Corey, Ms. Marianne Donaldson, Dr. Leonard Ellen, Mr. Daniel Gagnon, Mr. Leo Goldfarb, Mr. Paul Ivanier, Mr. Ronald Lawless, Me George Lengvari, Mr. Eric Molson, *Chancellor*, Ms. Susan O'Connell, Mr. Jean-François Plamondon, Mr. Humberto Santos, Mr. Brian Steck, Ms. Kathy Tsolakos

Guest: Mr. Michael Lennane, Communications Officer, Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:10 a.m.

1.1 Chairman's remarks

Mr. Groome informed the Governors that the Secretary-General's office had received, the day before, a letter from the Concordia University Faculty Association (CUFA) intended for distribution to the Board. He had declined permission to distribute the letter, in compliance with the policy established years before not to distribute, at Board meetings, documents unrelated to the Board agenda. Such documents, when received before the mailing, would normally be included therein.

Mr. Groome explained the letter stated that CUFA Council had unanimously adopted a motion of censure of the Chairman of the Board; CUFA protested Mr. Groome's action in having joined with the Chairs of the other six Québec university Boards to write to Premier Lucien Bouchard on the subject of the universities' financial situation.

Mr. Groome said that if the Board so wished the item would be put on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting. He would provide copies of the relevant letters -- CUFA's letter of 18 February 1997, and the letter of 8 November 1996 which was signed by seven university chairmen. Mr. Groome explained that the chairmen objected to the unilateral and arbitrary imposition of substantial budget reductions on universities, and asked for a meeting with Premier Bouchard to discuss several possible measures by

which the province could improve the universities' ability to manage their budgets. One measure among them suggested removal of the guarantee of job security under certain circumstances; this had provoked CUFA's censure. The Chairman said faculty unions throughout the province had vehemently rejected this proposal. He allowed that a Board faculty member might wish to move a Notice of Motion to propose discussion of CUFA's motion of censure at the March meeting. In that way, both letters could be provided to Governors before the meeting.

A faculty member objected, contending the letter should be distributed and discussed immediately because of the importance of the issue and the controversy surrounding it throughout the province. Dr. Lowy pointed out that three and one-half months had already elapsed since the Chairs' letter to the Premier was sent; he suggested waiting until March, when every Governor would possess adequate information to evaluate the issues. The faculty member responded that he did not doubt the Chair's actions were well-intended, but felt strongly that it was the Board's responsibility to discuss the matter as soon as possible.

Another faculty member recalled having told the Board several months earlier that he was uncomfortable with unilateral action by Board Chairs or their Executive Committees. He reiterated that the full Board is elected and entrusted with governance of the University. Mr. Groome asserted that the Chairman, who is held responsible by the government, does not require permission from the Board to communicate with the Premier. The Chairman said the matter would be on the agenda for the March meeting.

1.2 Approval of the Agenda

The Agenda was approved as submitted.

1.3 Approval of the Minutes of the Open Session of the previous meeting of the Board (22 January 1997)

Upon motion duly moved and seconded (Pelland, Renaud), it was unanimously RESOLVED:

R97-5 *THAT the Minutes of the Open Session of the previous regular meeting of the Board held on 22 January 1997, be approved.*

2. Business arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the Minutes.

3. Report of the Provost and Vice-Rector, Research, on Academic Planning

Dr. Lowy introduced the presentation by Provost and Vice-Rector, Research, Jack Lightstone. Dr. Lightstone introduced Mr. Michael Lennane who had agreed to provide technical support for the audio-visual component of the Provost's presentation.

Following consultations based on planning documents "Setting a Course for the Future" (1995) and "Following a Course Forward" (1996), and on the Faculties' individual planning processes, Dr. Lightstone produced a document in January 1997 which set out a proposal for bringing a comprehensive academic plan into effect. The document, entitled "Our Immediate Future", was discussed at Senate on 7 February 1997, after

having been approved by the Senate Committee on Academic Planning and Priorities (SCAPP).

Dr. Lightstone's presentation to the Board is summarized below.

Dr. Lightstone described the ongoing academic planning process, approved by Senate in March of 1995, as a forward-moving dialogue in which university-level and Faculty-based planning bodies speak in turn until sound decisions emerge. This dialogue is guided by university-wide principles, with Faculty-based deliberations generally producing refined and informed proposals.

The Provost reviewed the five broad principles adopted by Senate after the fall 1995 discussion of "Setting a Course for the Future"; these addressed both academic and economic considerations, and formed the framework for making planning decisions about individual programmes and units. The principles established the following priorities:

- 1) high academic quality in teaching and research programmes;
- 2) current and potential student demand;
- 3) a sense of our identity, mission, objectives and goals;
- 4) cost-efficiency;
- 5) opportunities for partnerships with others to enhance or maintain quality, while increasing cost-efficiency.

These principles were to form the framework for each Faculty and the School of Graduate Studies and Research to examine academic programmes and units over the winter and spring of 1996, to set priorities, and to propose specific, concrete actions.

Dr. Lightstone explained that the recent document, "Our Immediate Future," is informed by the content of these discrete planning processes, but also by recent Senate discussions about long-term academic goals, and the rapid pace of change in the external context in which Concordia operates. The latter has several aspects, including: government decisions not to raise tuition for university students who are residents of Quebec; frequent changes in the announced cuts to universities' operating budgets; the establishment of a ministerial commission on university financing; the establishment by CREPUQ of an arms-length commission with a specific mandate from the Minister to make recommendations about the pertinence and complementarity of all programmes in the Quebec university network. The Provost said Concordia is fortunate that Dr. Henry Habib, a member of our Board and Chair of the Political Science Department, had been appointed to the CREPUQ commission.

Building on earlier Senate discussions, the document recognizes the educational mission of Concordia set out in the "*axes de développement*" which were articulated by the Quebec government at the time of our founding, and acknowledges also Concordia's particular knowhow in making higher education accessible to persons who, by reason of background, may perceive university level education to be beyond their reach. Finally, the document recognizes that Concordia fills a unique niche in the Quebec university network which no other university can as knowledgeably occupy. At the same time, "Our Immediate Future" upholds Concordia's mission in the areas of post-graduate education and research. The main tenets of this document are (i) a firm belief that a university undergraduate education requires concentration in one discipline or area of inquiry, pure or applied, and (ii) undergraduate education must provide the tools of

responsible citizenship, and (iii) the University ought to provide opportunities to develop a range of practical skills which will make our students attractive to employers.

Dr. Lightstone said the University's immediate challenge was to balance these objectives, as well as the five principles, in a context of successive deep cuts by government to the fundamental resource base of every Quebec university. While the transition from general principles to specific programmatic decisions is a complex and often painful process, Concordia would have to make resolute and steady progress in that endeavour. He gave his assurance that students in affected programmes would be afforded a reasonable span of time to complete their programmes, as per current Senate policy.

At the 7 February 1997 Senate meeting, Senators requested time for the Faculties to respond. Since then, the Senate Steering Committee had decided to allow three months during which the Faculties and the School of Graduate Studies should develop detailed planning proposals to replace, augment or modify those contained in "Our Immediate Future". The proposals would be considered at the 30 May 1997 Senate meeting.

Dr. Lightstone deeply regretted the premature exposure and the prominence given by The Gazette on 8 February 1997 to "Our Immediate Future", especially given the high degree of specificity of its recommendations. He stated that the administration's overriding objective at the present time was to protect and enhance the academic and research programmes of Concordia University. The Provost declared he is immensely proud of our achievements, our many areas of strength, and the excellence of our faculty and students.

A faculty member said she wished to inform external Board members about the response Dr. Lightstone's document had evoked within the University. Many faculty, herself included, were struck by its negative tone, and she was very concerned about the effect of the Gazette article on morale inside the University and on our public profile -- especially as it could be transformed into lost enrolments. She told the Board that the document had been rejected by unanimous resolution of the Arts and Science Faculty Council. If realized, she said, the Provost's recommendations would put at risk most graduate programmes in the sciences, shifting Arts and Science in the direction of a predominantly undergraduate Faculty. The speaker added that the document contained factual errors and misrepresentations. It was also unclear if financial or academic criteria were driving the Provost's recommendations as neither was featured in the document's appendices; only enrolment figures had been appended. An additional consideration had come to her attention, consisting in legal obstacles to switching students who had been admitted to an, afterward, closed "specialization" programme, into a "major" programme within the same subject area. While conveying her high regard for Dr. Lightstone, she admitted to being very concerned for the future of the Faculty. Dr. Lightstone responded. He accepted responsibility for the academic tone of the document, which he had been told was insensitive to the feelings of the individuals affected.

The problem the University faces, he said, is to produce the same level and quality of output using only 75% of current operating funds and of academic personnel. While contractual obligations to faculty and to students must be observed, there was no question that the better part of the shortfall would have to be taken from salaries. A faculty member said he appreciated that Dr. Lightstone was obligated to show courage in assuming his considerable responsibilities under the present circumstances. However, he would have preferred that the Provost set objectives and allow responsibility for how

to achieve those objectives to the individual units or departments. He stated also that Governors should receive sufficient information to have a global picture of University resources, including space and personnel; research by the institutional planning office should be at their disposal.

A Governor observed that the Board is not normally kept abreast of academic issues at the University. Dr. Lightstone responded that only a small range of academic questions require approval by the Board, according to the official documents, but he agreed the information could be useful to Governors. The Provost said he would be pleased to provide academic planning documents to the Board.

An external Board member suggested that a more precise use of terms would have made the document easier to understand. She said that several expressions seemed to have ambiguous or multiple meanings, while others presented problems for readers unfamiliar with administrative details at Concordia.

Another external Board member congratulated the Provost for having produced the controversial planning document; he expected some creative solutions would result. A faculty member said the basic model set out in Jack's document was flawed, contending that quality could not be maintained while resources were reduced by such a large margin. He said we must, instead, seek to minimize the decline in quality. Other speakers held that efficiency gains could be generated by restructuring. The faculty member insisted the University should not, by its actions, imply that the effects of budget cuts can be contained without affecting the quality of education provided.

The Rector reminded the Board that "Our Immediate Future" is not a budget document, but a planning tool for a University operating with very arbitrarily constrained revenues. Concordia's particular academic make-up had evolved over time in response to the intellectual curiosity and entrepreneurial spirit of faculty members. In the absence of a long-term academic plan, specialized programmes had proliferated. Dr. Lowy explained that budget constraints had forced the administration to undertake a thorough evaluation of all programmes and to assign relative priorities to them. Doing so would not solve Concordia's financial problems, at least in the short-run, but would create a framework in which plans for the University's future development would be meaningfully situated. The Quebec universities could learn from one another's adjustment strategies, the Rector said, but each was unique and must respond appropriately. Dr. Lowy conceded it was unfortunate that this recent document was publicized by the news media, but the discussion had taken place in the open session of Senate. The Rector said he was certain Dr. Lightstone was on the right track. The administration would listen to criticism, but stay on its course.

4. Progress reports of the Advisory Search Committees

4.1 Advisory Search Committee for a Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science

As Chair of the Advisory Search Committee for a Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science, Dr. Lightstone reported that the Committee expected to submit its recommendation to the Board in March.

4.2 Advisory Search Committee for a Dean of Graduate Studies and Research

As Chair of the Advisory Search Committee for a Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, Dr. Lightstone reported the Committee was in the course of interviews.

A faculty member asked to know the status of the Advisory Search Committee for a Director of University Libraries. Dr. Lightstone answered that election of faculty members representing Senate had been held up. Another significant factor delaying the search was the ongoing discussion with McGill concerning the potential for a more unified libraries' system. Dr. Lightstone explained that any proposals arising from these discussions would come to the Board for approval.

5. Reports of the Standing Committees

5.1 Report of the Budget Committee

Mr. Neysmith, Vice-Chair of the Budget Committee, reported in the absence of Mr. Aune. With regard to the meeting of 13 February 1997, the current year's budget was reviewed and projections for 1996-97 results were considered. Compared with a projected surplus of \$1.169 million, it now appeared results would show a surplus of \$1.2 million.

He reported the University's projected budget shortfall for 1997-98 was \$15.4 million, reduced to approximately \$12.4 million by the pension holiday. It was expected the results of the ERIP and FALRIP retirement plans would generate savings of about \$4.7 million, leaving an amount of \$7.7 million to be cut from the operating budget. The Budget Committee would consider recommendations for distribution of the cuts, and would likely report to the Board in May.

Mr. Neysmith told the Board that his recent professional involvement with the provincial finance ministry made clear the Ministry's view that universities would be allowed to "sink or swim". He said the perception there is not sympathetic; Québec is believed to have more universities than its student population warrants.

5.2 Report of the Communications Committee

Ms. Woods, Chair of the Communications Committee, reported that the meeting of 23 January 1997 was extremely informative. The Committee enjoyed presentations from Mr. Jac Joannisse about the image campaign, and from internal staff about on-line courses and the impact of the World Wide Web (WWW) at Concordia. A future meeting would be dedicated to an in-depth exploration of how to exploit the educational and communications potential of new technologies, especially the WWW. Ms. Woods said she was very excited by the possibilities, and hoped to bring a similar presentation to the Board.

6. Report of the Rector

The Rector reported proudly that Concordia publications won three awards from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE): Concordia Magazine won a silver medal, and bronze medals were awarded to Concordia's Thursday Report and the 1995-96 Rector's Report. He gave credit to Mr. Laurie Zack, Interim Director of Public Relations, who was applauded heartily. Dr. Lowy also announced that Dr. Kryzanowski and his colleague Dr. Richard Chung were recognized by the Toronto Society of Financial Analysts for their research on determinants of accuracy in earnings forecasting. Mr. Groome offered his congratulations.

Dr. Lowy reported on a recent meeting with the Minister of Education, in which Concordia's proposals for real estate conversion from leased to owned properties met

with approval. Vice-Rector, Services, Charles Emond would submit a detailed space plan in the near future.

The Rector said that he, together with CFO Larry English and Ms. Marie-Andrée Robitaille-Brodie, had a successful meeting with the *Commission sur le financement des universités*. They recommended that the Commission consider adopting a scheme, used in Ontario, which would allow universities' enrolments to vary within a "corridor" of three to five percent without affecting grant levels. Such a measure would stabilize revenues sufficiently to permit longer-term planning, the Rector said.

7. Report of the Vice-Rectors and the Chief Financial Officer

7.1 Provost and Vice-Rector, Research, Jack Lightstone waived his remarks.

7.2 Vice-Rector, Services, Charles Emond waived his remarks.

7.3 Vice-Rector, Institutional Relations, Marcel Danis reported that negotiations with three unions were going well, but negotiations with the Concordia University Faculty Association were slow. If things did not improve within forty-five days, he would bring a recommendation to the Board.

7.4 Chief Financial Officer Larry English waived his remarks.

8. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

9. Any other business

Mr. Renaud reported that improved tax conditions for donating capital-appreciated property had been adopted.

Dr. Habib reported that Human Resources Minister Pierre Pettigrew would be a guest of the Political Science Department on Thursday, 27 February 1997, when he would deliver an address on the role of the state in Canada. Governors were invited to attend the lecture at the De Seve Cinema, at noon.

10. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Board will be held at 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday, 19 March 1997, in Room GM 407-1, on the SGW Campus.

11. Adjournment

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 9:53 a.m.

Me Bérengère Gaudet
Secretary of the Board of Governors